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ABSTRACT

California State Standard 7.1 is delineated in the following manner: "Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire." One important legacy of ancient Rome is the foundation it set for the development of modern democracies. The Roman Stoics built upon the Greek Stoic model by defining philosophically the role of the citizen in a society. The sample topic allows seventh-grade students to examine their perceptions of the role of citizens in a society, and study more specifically the Stoic philosophy of Marcus Aurelius. It focuses on the early strengths and contributions of Rome and the significance of Roman citizenship, the geographic borders of the empire at its height, and the establishment by Constantine of the capital of Constantinople. The lesson discusses the uses and significance of the topic; presentation and activities ("Beginning the Topic"; "Developing the Topic"; "Culminating the Topic"); extended and correlated activities; and resources for the sample topic. Appended are excerpts from "The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius." Suggested time for lesson implementation is two to three class periods. (BT)

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CALIFORNIA History-Social Science

Course Models

World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times

Stoicism and Civic Duty

Grade 7 Model Lesson for Standard 7.1

Edited by Dr. Michelle Zachlod

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World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times

Stoicism and Civic Duty

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Grade 7

World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times

Stoicism and Civic Duty

Standard 1

Students analyze the causes and effects of the vast expansion and ultimate disintegration of the Roman Empire, in terms of:

1. the early strengths and lasting contributions of Rome (e.g., significance of Roman citizenship; rights under Roman law; Roman art, architecture, engineering and philosophy; preservation and transmission of Christianity) and its ultimate internal weakness (e.g., rise of autonomous military powers within the empire, undermining of citizenship by the growth of corruption and slavery, lack of education and distribution of news)

2. the geographic borders of the empire at its height and the factors that threatened its territorial cohesion

3. the establishment by Constantine of the new capital in Constantinople and the development of the Byzantine Empire with an emphasis on the consequences of the development of two distinct European civilizations, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic, with two distinct views on church-state relations.

Sample Topic for Standard 1:	**Suggested Time:**
Roman Stoic philosophy and its emphasis on civic duty.	2-3 class periods

Significance of the Topic

One of the most important legacies of Rome is the foundation it set for the development of modern democracies. In developing this unprecedented political system, the Roman Republic fundamentally restructured the relationship between a government and its citizens. While due attention should be paid to studying the Roman republican government and the philosophies behind it, the role of the citizen deserves as much analysis. The Roman Stoics built upon the Greek Stoic model by defining philosophically the role of the citizen in a society.

The name Stoicism derives from the Greek *Stoa Poikile,* or "painted porch." The founder of the Greek Stoic philosophy, Zeno, did most of his teaching from that painted porch. The Stoics believed that natural laws govern everything. Ail parts of the universe are subordinate to the whole; nothing can isolate itself. People were instructed to gain happiness by following reason, not their emotions. If one were able to calmly address their daily situations and see them as part of a greater system, they were better able to accept difficult circumstances and concentrate on doing their duty according to the natural law.

The Roman Stoics, (e.g. Seneca and Marcus Aurelius) applied this philosophy to the daily workings of government and society. The greatest good for each individual was to live in harmony with the whole, to act in for the general good of the whole. There was an idea of Natural Unity that included not only mankind but the nature of God where each as a distinct place and function.

The practical application of the Stoic philosophy throughout Roman history had its share of ups and downs. One of the high points occurred in the second century when one of the philosophy's most dedicated students' Marcus Aurelius served as Emperor of Rome. On the other hand, many other Roman leaders felt threatened by the pressures from Stoic dissidents, resulting in periods where Stoics were banished from Rome. The element of Stoic philosophy which tended to get the greatest attention in the thousands of years since its Greek and Roman days is the notion of Civic Duty. Civic Duty is the Stoics legacy to defining the relationship between a government and its citizens in that it calls upon the responsibilities of the citizen in maintaining a just and democratic government.

Presentation and Activities for the Sample Topic:

The sample topic described below is meant to allow students to examine their perceptions of the role of citizens in a society (Beginning the Topic) as well as study more specifically the Stoic philosophy of Marcus Aurelius on the subject (Developing the Topic). Students will then revisit the connection to present day in looking for examples of Stoic ideals in today's world (Culminating the Topic).

A
Beginning the Topic

The beginning of the year is an ideal place to introduce and examine the role of people in a society. Students should be made aware that this examination is at the core of much of the Social Science discipline. The entire year will serve as a vehicle to analyze, compare and contrast various ways social and political systems have developed throughout world history

In order to simplify this complex idea, guide the class in a "Think, Pair, Share" brainstorming activity that gradually takes the idea from a personal level to that of the larger context of society. Ask the students to title a piece of paper "Family" and divide it into two columns, one titled "Parents," the other "Children." Ask them to brainstorm the responsibilities of each within the family. Wrap up the discussion with enlisting the students to summarize what would result from Parents and Children honoring, or not honoring, their responsibilities.

Take the concept to a broader level by having the students turn their paper over, title the back page "Society" and the columns "Government" and "Citizens." Repeat the exercise as suggested above.

Explain that the next activities will examine the relationship of government to its citizens by focusing specifically on the role of citizens within a society, using Rome as an example. Enlist existing knowledge from the students of what they remember from 6th grade about Rome, leading to a brief introduction of Marcus Aurelius and the Stoic philosophers.

B
Developing the Topic

This section will describe a way for the students to discover the principle tenets of the Stoic philosophy by analyzing parts of *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*. Although there are many valuable excerpts, a sample of them are

reproduced in Appendix 1. Of course, you should assess your students and provide them what you think would be sufficient to gain understanding of the essential elements of the Stoic philosophy of Civic Duty.

Explain to the students that they will be examining this philosophy firsthand by reading excerpts from a text written almost 2,000 years ago. Challenge them by indicating that many of these excerpts are difficult to understand and rather abstract. Encourage them to discuss the meaning of the excerpts within their group.

Place students in heterogeneous groups of three or four. Provide copies of Appendix 1. As a strategy for reading, comprehending and summarizing what they learn from the excerpts, you may want to provide comprehension questions" or have them fill out a chart that includes a column for the Book/Paragraph number, Brief Summary or Lesson of the excerpt, and maybe a column for applying that lesson to a present-day situation. You also may want to wrap up their examination by asking them to pick two or three excerpts with which they particularly agree or disagree: and list any they still do not understand. Discuss their findings with the large group.

To solidify their knowledge of the Stoic philosophy as it applies to civic duty, assign a homework activity that can translate their knowledge to a different medium. Some examples of this type of activity may include: having the students create a cartoon strip illustrating the main tenets of the philosophy of Marcus Aurelius; create an acrostic poem using the letters that spell "Stoicism," "Marcus Aurelius," or "Civic Duty;" or visually illustrate one or more of the ideas stressed by Stoicism.

The students are now ready to apply their understanding of Marcus Aurelius' Stoic philosophy to modern-day life.

C
Culminating the Topic

This activity is meant to serve two purposes: first, an extension activity to apply what they have learned to a situation more familiar to them, and second, as an assessment of the students' understanding of the Stoic view of Civic Duty.

Provide the students with newspapers and magazines. Have them try and find articles or other evidence of people illustrating or contradicting the Stoic philosophy by their actions described in the article. Guide them in making a Civic Duty Portfolio where each page includes a title that incorporates a

principle of the Stoic philosophy, the article found in a newspaper or magazine, and a brief paragraph that summarizes the article and explains how a person's action described in the article either illustrates or contradicts that Stoic principle.

Encourage the students to reach out to the community by writing letters to the editors of the newspaper or magazine commending the people described in the article for their actions that follow the Roman Stoic principle of Civic Duty.

Extended and Correlated Activities

SERVICE LEARNING CONNECTION: Develop a class or school community service project that allows the students to practice the Stoic principle of Civic Duty. As services are provided to the community, have the students write or create a product to connect their actions to an excerpt from *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*.

LITERATURE CONNECTION: Literature can be used in a multitude of ways and for a variety of purposes. Gather some Greek and Roman myths and/or folktales from other cultures. Tell the students that they are reading these stories for content but also to assess any lessons from the stories that remind them of any of the principles of the Stoic philosophy of Marcus Aurelius.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CONNECTION: Based on their learning and their experience in putting together their Civic Duty Portfolio (see Culminating the Topic), have students create a play that illustrates the Stoic principles. Encourage them to be creative but one suggestion could be having students imagine Marcus Aurelius time-traveling to the present day with the play describing present day experiences through his eyes and principles.

This play could be done in conjunction with the Drama or English teacher at your school and performed in front of a larger audience of parents and other members of the community.

You may also give groups a choice to visually represent their play in a cartoon strip or storyboard format using captions and voice-bubbles to communicate the most important elements of the scenes.

POLITICAL SCIENCE CONNECTION: At the heart of this investigation is the relationship between a government and its citizens. Students easily realize that a society only works if there is a responsible government and responsible citizens. Encourage an investigation, either through research or through the examination of the units throughout the year, to compare and contrast the ways

that a government and society interact. What type of behavior do various governments promote or discourage and why? What happens when the balance or harmony between the responsible government and responsible citizenry is disrupted?

Resources for the Sample Topic

** Aurelius, Marcus. The meditations of Marcus Aurelius. Translated by G.M.A. Grube. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963. There are many editions of The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius translated by various scholars. All of them, of course, contain the Twelve Books with numbered chapters within the Books that correspond to the excerpts in Appendix 1. The editions vary on whether they include commentary, an index, glossaries, etc.

SEE PUBLISHED EDITION OF THE COURSE MODEL FOR RESOURCES FOR OTHER TOPICS THAT MAY SUPPLEMENT THIS SECTION.

Appendix 1

Excerpts from
THE MEDITATIONS OF MARCUS AURELIUS

BOOK I

3. From my mother[1]: piety, generosity, to avoid not only evil deeds but evil thoughts; to live simply without any display of wealth. ...
5. From my tutor: not to be a Green or a Blue partisan at the races, or a supporter of the ... gladiators at the Circus; endurance and frugality; to do one's own work and not be a busybody; not to welcome slanderous gossip. ...
8. From Apollonius: ... not to look to anything else but Reason even for a moment; to be the same man always, when in great pain, at the loss of a child, or during a long illness; that the same man can be very much in earnest and yet relaxed.
9. From Sextus: understanding what it means to live according to nature. ...
11. From Fronto: to note what it means for a ruler to be envious, unreliable, or to act a part: how ... those we call aristocrats are somehow lacking in affection.
12. From Alexander the Platonist: only rarely and when unavoidable to say or to write to someone, "I am too busy," ... to continually excuse ourselves from performing the duties we owe to those who live with us. ...
14. From Severus: love of family, love of truth, love of justice; to grasp the idea of a Commonwealth with the same laws for all, governed on the basis of equality and free speech, also the idea of a monarchy which prizes the liberty of its subjects above all things. ...
16. From my father: not to take an empty pride in what are considered honors; to love work and persevere in it; to listen to those who have something to contribute to the common good; to give each man impartially what he deserves; ...to investigate carefully such matters as came before Council: he would persevere in this, did not give up easily. and was never satisfied with first impressions; to watch always over the essential needs of the empire, to allocate its resources, and to tolerate criticism in these matters.
17. From the gods: that I was subjected to the rule of a father who was to rid me of all vanity, but to reduce oneself very nearly to the status of a private citizen without thereby abasing oneself or neglecting the duties of leadership for the common good.... [T]hat I often had a clear picture in mind of what it means to live in accord with nature, so that ... nothing stops me from living in accord with nature, and if I still fall short of this it is

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[1] By this form of expression, Marcus Aurelius does not mean that he had acquired these qualities but that he had the opportunity to observe them.

through my own fault, and because I have not paid attention to the reminders.

BOOK II

1. Say to yourself in the morning: I shall meet people who are ... ungracious, ...deceitful and antisocial; they have all become like that because they have no understanding of good and evil. But I who have contemplated the essential beauty of good and the essential ugliness of evil' who know the nature of the wrongdoer is of one kin with mine -not ... of the same blood or seed but sharing the same mind, the same portion of the divine - I cannot be harmed by any one of them... I cannot feel anger against him who is of my kin, nor hate him. We were born to labor together, like the feet, the hands, the eyes, and the rows of upper and lower teeth. To work against one another is therefore contrary to nature, and to be angry against a man or turn one's back on him is to work against him.
3. The works of the gods are full of Providence. The works of Chance are not divorced from Nature or from the spinning and weaving together of those things which are governed by Providence. Thence everything flows.

BOOK III

6. It is not lawful for anything ... be it the praise of men, offices of power, wealth, or the enjoyment of pleasures - to stand in the way of what is reasonable and for the common good. All these things, even if for a while they seem to accord with the good life, suddenly overwhelm one and lead one astray.

BOOK IV

12. You should always be ready for two things, first, to do only what reason ... perceives to be to the benefit of mankind; second, to change your course if one be present to put you right.... Such change, however, should always result from being convinced of what is just and for the common good, and what you choose to do must be of that nature, not because pleasure or fame may result from it.

BOOK V

6. One man, when he has done a good deed, is ready also to put down in his accounts the gratitude due to him. Another ... privately thinks that something is owed to him. A third man does not even know what he had done, but he is like a vine which has produced its grapes. Like the bee who has made honey, this man who has done good does not know it, but turns to the next task, as the vine turns to produce grapes again in due season. One should therefore be among those who do good unconsciously.

16. Where it is possible to live, it is also possible to live the good life; it is possible to live in a palace, therefore it is also possible to live the good life in a palace.
22. What brings no harm to the community does not harm its members. Whenever you think you have been injured, apply this rule: if the community is not hurt by it, then neither have I been hurt.
37. To be lucky is to attribute good fortune to oneself, and good fortune means good dispositions of the soul, good impulses, good deeds.

BOOK VI

22. I do my duty; other things do not disturb me? for they are either inanimate or irrational, or else they wander in ignorance of their proper road.
54. That which does not benefit the swarm does not benefit the bee.

BOOK VII

13. Rational beings in their separate bodies are as closely related to each other as the limbs of one body; for they were created for co-operation in a common task. But if you call yourself merely a part instead of a limb, you do not yet love your fellow men from the heart, nor derive complete joy from doing good; you will do it merely as a duty, not as doing good to yourself.
55. [L]ook straight ahead to where Nature is leading you for every man must do what is compatible with his own make-up. The first principle of the human make-up is social obligation? the second is resistance to the persuasions of the flesh ..

BOOK VIII

59. Men are born for each other's sake. So either teach people or endure them.

source: Aurelius, Marcus. *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.* Translated by G.M.A. Grube. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. Inc. 1963.

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